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ABSTRACT

In U.S. society dominance appears extremely desirable. The purpose of this study was an attempt to measure the relationship between dominance, self-esteem, and life satisfaction. Research questions were: "Do the people who score high on the Dominance scale of the California Psychological Inventory have higher self-esteem scores as measured by the Good and Good Self-Esteem Scale?" and "Do life satisfaction scores on the Life Satisfaction Index A show a significant correlation with dominance and self-esteem scores?" The subjects came from introductory psychology classes and upper-division psychology classes. There were 116 males and 188 females who took part in the study. The results indicated that those who scored high on the Dominance scale also scored high on the Self-Esteem scale. It was also found that those who scored higher on the Dominance and/or the Self-Esteem scale also had higher scores on life satisfaction. Upperclassmen scored higher on both dominance and self-esteem, and males scored higher on self-esteem. There were no interaction effects on gender, dominance, and self-esteem on life satisfaction. Contains 16 references. (JBJ)

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THE RELATIONSHIP OF DOMINANCE, SELF-ESTEEM, AND LIFE SATISFACTION TO SELECTED VARIABLES

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Abstract

The Relationship of Dominance, Self-Esteem, and Life Satisfaction to Selected Variables

The purpose of this study was an attempt to measure the relationship between dominance, self-esteem, and life satisfaction. Do the people who score high on the Dominance scale of the California Psychological Inventory have higher self-esteem scores as measured by the Good and Good Self-Esteem Scale? Do life satisfaction scores on the Life Satisfaction Index A show a significant correlation with dominance and self-esteem scores? The subjects came from introductory psychology classes and upper-division psychology classes. There were 116 males and 188 females who took part in the study. The results indicated that those who scored high on the Dominance scale also scored high on the Self-Esteem scale. It was also found that those who scored higher on the Dominance and/or the Self-Esteem scale also had higher scores on life satisfaction. Upperclassmen scored higher on both dominance and self-esteem, and males scored higher on self-esteem. There were no interaction effects on gender, dominance, and self-esteem on life satisfaction scores.

Chapter 1

Introduction

In this society dominance appears to be extremely desirable. People want to be able to govern their own lives, but some take it to the extreme and attempt to control others. These individuals want to feel as if they can handle themselves and everyone else around them. Studies have attempted to show how effective dominance can be and how it can be used. With studies on rape it was reported that power, control, and aggression were strong motives with rapists (Groth, 1979; Selkin, 1975). Myers, Templer, and Brown (1984) reported that rapists picked the rape victims because of the vulnerability of the persons and to see if they could be intimidated. Selkin (1978) found that the women who successfully resisted rape were high on the Dominance scale of the California Psychological Inventory (CPI) as compared to those women who were raped. Also, Hartik (1979) found that beaten women had lower self-esteem than the dominant women who had not been beaten. This, of course, does not give a man the right to rape a woman or beat a woman because she is not dominant, but the point is that dominance can play a crucial role in very important issues. From these studies one cannot know whether these differences were there before the attack or if the attack itself caused these individuals to lose their

dominance and/or self-esteem. Myers et al. (1984) found that rape victims had scored low on coping measures. There was a combination of low scores on social presence, dominance, and assertiveness, which indicated that these might be women who would have difficulty taking care of themselves. These people are not likely to show dominance in interpersonal relations or be assertive in trying to reach their goals.

Ultimately, one has to look at whether those who have high scores on the dominance scales necessarily have higher scores on self-esteem or are possibly compensating for a low self-esteem by being dominant. In a study by Freeman and Lanning (1989) measuring dominance and self-esteem of men and women, it was found that women especially desire dominance (fear of organizational power), but have a low self-esteem. This study seems to indicate that men like the struggle for power; whereas, women seem to avoid the dominance and power struggle. From this study it appears that while there are truly dominant people with high self-esteem, there are those individuals who actually have a low self-esteem and are trying to improve or compensate for this by displaying a dominant personality. Pickering and Galvin-Schaefers (1988) found in a study about women re-entering the job market that the women who had lower-level jobs had lower mean scores on assertiveness and autonomy than career women did. However, the subjects did not have the low mean

scores on self-esteem or on dominance that had been predicted. This would seem to indicate that a higher-paying job or higher-level status of a job does not necessarily mean that a person is more dominant or has a higher self-esteem.

Some studies looked at differences in dominance and self-esteem between genders. Megargee (1969) found that high-dominant women were not as assertive with low-dominant men. This would indicate that there may be difficulty for a female becoming the leader, even if she is better prepared for the position. This is interesting because this society seems to indicate that dominance should not be considered an absolutely necessary characteristic to be successful. By this, it would appear that when one thinks of a successful person in life that person might possibly say that they fought their way to the top, or people around them often say this. The desire to dominate initially appears to be a highly desirable trait to have, but possibly it does not have to be present to be successful in life. It would be nice to know that one does not have to step all over someone to do well themselves in life. Carbonell (1984) found that males who scored low on the dominance scale became the leaders when working with females who scored high on the dominance scale. However, in the dyads that were of the same sex, the person who scored high on the dominance scale likely became the leader. It appears that women, possibly

because of society's pressure, fear the dominant role, and even when a female is dominant, she is more withdrawn when around a low-dominant male. Berger, Cohen, and Zelditch (1972) found that when groups were task-oriented, indicators, such as sex, ethnicity, race, and education, likely determined behavior, especially if there was little information about the competence required for the task. However, Shaw (1981) found that if an individual has abilities that are similar to the task of the group, the person can influence the group more easily and is more likely to become leader of the group.

Good and Good (1975) found that there was a significant tendency for males to report a higher self-esteem than female subjects. Although society does seem to allow for more dominance in males, this may be decreasing due to women working; it is now more acceptable for women to display dominant characteristics.

Benson and Hornsby (1988) conducted a study on individual differences with intragroup and negotiation influence. It was found that the main need of high-dominant people is rationality and would indicate that they try strategies of influence to get people to change their minds and move to their way of thinking. These people are more likely to report being quite adept at influencing people if they believe strongly in their beliefs, but not so adept if they are not convinced on an issue. Benson and Hornsby's

(1988) definition of dominance would be adequate except for the word rationality. This term seems to lend itself to the word assertive which is not as aggressive as one would think of dominance as being. With regard to dominance on job evaluation committees, it was found that dominant people can persuade other people mainly when they feel very strongly about their position being right. A point to consider is whether these studies are confusing dominance and assertiveness. One would think of dominant persons as pushy and out to get their way, no matter what. On the other hand, assertive people are those who take a stand, but in an appropriate, organized manner. Assertive people are reasonable and make their thoughts and feelings known, but not in an aggressive manner. These people do not infringe on the rights of others.

Benson and Hornsby (1988) found that self-esteem was related to strategies of influence. People who had low self-esteem would not use threats as a strategy, even though they would be more effective; whereas, those who had high levels of self-esteem would use threats. This may indicate that even though low self-esteem individuals would not use threats, they may be insecure enough to be influenced by threats from other people. What is interesting is whether some low self-esteem individuals are trying to compensate for their poor self-esteem by being pushy and dominant.

Ray (1981) indicated that a person who is dominant is displaying an authoritarian personality and is aggressive. The assertiveness that some people display is considered nonaggressive dominance. This makes sense up to the point where people who are labeled assertive are dominant. This seems to indicate that the terms are getting thrown around and are becoming quite confusing.

Holliman and Guthrie (1989) found the CPI to be valid and useful, particularly when compared to other tests. Gough (1987) stated that the scales from the CPI have two goals: (a) to try and predict what people might say in certain situations and (b) to try and identify people who will be evaluated, as well as described, in specific ways that are interpersonally significant.

The Good and Good Self-Esteem Scale (1975) appears to be a valid measure. In a validation study, Hester and Royal (1991) found that there were significant correlations between the Good and Good Self-Esteem Scale and the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale, with the exception of the self-criticism score.

The Life Satisfaction Index A (LSIA) is a measure of the degree of satisfaction of an individual's life. This test was developed by Neugarten, Havinghurst, and Tobin (1961) to measure five dimensions: (a) zest versus apathy, (b) resolution and fortitude, (c) congruence between desired and achieved goals, (d) positive self-concept, and (e) mood.

The LSIA is considered to assess the long-term scope of an individual's life satisfaction, not just a short-term period of time. The LSIA has 20 different items on which an individual can agree or disagree:

> The extent that he: (a) takes pleasure from the round of activities that constitutes his everyday life; (b) regards his life as meaningful and accepts resolutely that which life has been; (c) feels he has succeeded in achieving his major goals; (d) holds a positive image of self; and (e) maintains happy and optimistic attitudes and mood (Neugarten et al., 1961, p. 137).

It would seem to make sense, although there has not been any research on the subject, that if people have high self-esteem they will have a higher Life Satisfaction Index score, unless some drastic change in their life has recently occurred.

This study is designed to answer the following questions:

1. Do people who score high on the Dominance scale of the CPI have high self-esteem?

2. How does life satisfaction play a role with dominance and self-esteem?

3. Is there a difference between males and females on dominance, self-esteem, and life satisfaction?

One might suspect that those who would score high on the Dominance scale would score low on the Self-Esteem scale and would also have lower scores on the Life Satisfaction scale as well. Admittedly, this would not happen in all cases, but would be noticeable enough to make one rethink

dominance or at least the way it is to be defined. If one has a low self-esteem score, it will be quite possible to see how that would be a negative influence on how an individual perceives his life and if the individual is satisfied with life. One might suspect that more males will be dominant and those that have a lower self-esteem would still be higher than those women who report high dominance and low self-esteem.

Chapter 2

Method

Subjects

There were 305 undergraduate and graduate university students from Middle Tennessee State University who participated in this study. The subjects came from introductory psychology classes and upper-division psychology classes. There were 116 males and 188 females who took part in the study. One of the subjects was not identified by gender. The students who participated in this study were at minimal risk as described by the American Psychological Association (see Appendix A). Informed consent (see Appendix B), voluntary participation, opportunity to leave at any time, anonymity, and confidentiality were maintained.

Materials

The Dominance scale of the California Psychological Inventory (CPI) was used. It contains 36 items relating to dominance and was the only section of the CPI given. The Good and Good Self-Esteem Scale was used to measure self-esteem. The Life Satisfaction Index A was given to assess the life satisfaction of the subjects and consisted of 21 items. A questionnaire (see Appendix C) was also used to get information, such as sex, age, and marital status. The data were collected anonymously. The consent form was

given, and tests were passed out. This protected the anonymity of the subjects.

Design and Procedure

The subjects were asked to sign a consent form and were then given a packet containing the questionnaire, the CPI, the Self-Esteem scale, and the Life Satisfaction scale. The instruments were arranged in random order in the packets. The entire session took approximately 30 minutes.

Chapter 3

Results

The means and standard deviations of the personality variables for each demographic variable are reported in Table 1. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) showed a significant effect of classification on the combination of scores of dominance, self-esteem, and life satisfaction, $F(4, 300) = 3.45$, $p = .009$. This means that there was a significant difference between the freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors, and graduate students on the three scales.

Classification had a significant effect on dominance, $F(4, 300) = 3.89$, $p = .023$. This means that there was a significant difference between the freshmen (lowest) and seniors (highest). Dominance scores increased progressively from freshmen through the graduate students. The effect of classification on self-esteem was significant, $F(4, 304) = 3.89$, $p = .004$. Self-Esteem scores increased progressively from freshmen through the graduate students. Life satisfaction did not show a significant classification effect, $F(4, 304) = 1.13$, $p = .342$.

The next MANOVA was performed for the effect of gender on the combination of scores of dominance, self-esteem, and life satisfaction. Although the general MANOVA did not show a significant gender effect, $F(1, 302) = 2.36$, $p = .125$,

Table 1

Mean Scores for Dominance, Self-Esteem, and Life Satisfaction

Group	n	Dominance Mean/SD	Self-Esteem Mean/SD	Life Satisfaction Mean/SD
Class				
Freshman	47	20.53/5.71	13.17/5.47	11.43/4.47
Sophomore	56	21.18/6.06	15.34/5.39	12.09/3.70
Junior	76	21.85/5.99	15.54/5.90	12.80/3.76
Senior	124	23.40/5.45	16.74/5.47	12.54/4.16
Graduate	2	23.50/0.71	20.00/1.41	14.50/0.71
Total	305	22.16/5.80	15.66/5.67	12.36/4.03
Gender				
Male	116	22.55/5.70	16.64/5.85	12.47/3.94
Female	188	21.96/5.87	15.05/5.48	12.32/4.02
Total	304	22.18/5.81	15.65/5.67	12.38/3.99

there was a significant effect of gender on self-esteem, $F(1, 302) = 5.73$, $p = .017$. This indicates that males in this study have higher scores on self-esteem than females, as expected.

MANOVAs were performed for the effects of age, marital status, race, religious preference, religiosity, political affiliation, political orientation, combined income of parents, highest educational level of mother, highest educational level of father, college of major, and grade point average; no significance was found.

A Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was performed among the variables of dominance, self-esteem, and life satisfaction. The Pearson product-moment coefficients are reported in Table 2. A significant positive correlation was found between dominance and self-esteem, $r(308) = .63$, $p < .0001$. A significant positive correlation was found between dominance and life satisfaction, $r(308) = .39$, $p < .0001$. This means that those who scored high on the Dominance scale tended to have higher scores on the Life Satisfaction scale. A significant positive correlation was found between self-esteem and life satisfaction, $r(308) = .55$, $p < .0001$, as expected.

The median-split method was used to divide groups into high or low dominance and self-esteem scores. The mean scores and median cutoffs are reported in Table 3.

Table 2

Pearson Product-Moment Correlations Among Dominance, Self-Esteem, and Life Satisfaction

Variable	1	2	3
1. Dominance	1	-	-
2. Self-Esteem	.63*	-	-
3. Life Satisfaction	.39*	.55*	-

*$p < .0001$.

Table 3

Mean Scores of Life Satisfaction for Different Groups

	Low dominance		High dominance	
Groups	Male/n	Female/n	Male/n	Female/n
Low self-esteem	9.69/42	10.63/78	10.70/10	11.83/30
High self-esteem	13.27/22	14.00/27	15.26/42	14.25/53

Note. Median cutoff, dominance = 23; self-esteem = 16.

A 2 (Gender) x 2 (Dominance) x 2 (Self-Esteem) factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) shows a significant dominance effect on life satisfaction, $F(3, 303) = 6.36$, $p = .012$. This means that those who scored high on the Dominance scale were also more likely to have higher scores on life satisfaction. There was also a significant self-esteem effect on life satisfaction, $F(3, 303) = 55.50$, $p < .0001$. This means that those who scored high on the Self-Esteem scale were also more likely to have higher scores on the Life Satisfaction scale. It was also found that there was no significant gender effect on life satisfaction, $F(3, 303) = .44$, $p = .51$. No significant interaction effects were found.

Chapter 4

Discussion

The correlation between dominance and self-esteem was significant. This means that those who scored higher on the Dominance scale also scored higher on the Self-Esteem scale. It was expected that those who had high scores on dominance would have low self-esteem scores, although this would not happen in all cases. This study found that the opposite occurred. There was also a significant positive correlation between dominance and life satisfaction. A significant positive correlation was found between self-esteem and life satisfaction. This is expected because if one has a high self-esteem, then one likely has a high life satisfaction.

Ultimately, the correlations show the dominant person in a positive way because the dominant person has a high self-esteem score and a high life satisfaction score. Several conclusions could be made from this data. Possibly, dominant people do have higher levels of self-esteem. This may be due to their prior learning history where they have found that when they are aggressive and pushy they tend to get their way. From their past successes, they feel that they have control over their own lives and, therefore, they feel satisfied with what they have accomplished. If they have had prior success in behaving this way, they will likely continue their dominant behavior.

There was an effect found of classification on dominance. Classification as a freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior influences the dominance variable. This may mean that one becomes progressively more dominant and might be indicating that the further students go in a course of study, the more dominant they become, or that less dominant students do not persist to higher classifications. It was also found that males had a higher self-esteem level in this study. This supports previous research and can be expected.

It is more interesting that there was no significant gender effect on dominance. This means that males did not score significantly higher on the Dominance scale than females. It may be that females scored as high as males on a scale of dominance because it was a college population and those stereotypes are not as applicable with this population. There were no significant effects found for age, marital status, race, religious preference, religiosity, political affiliation, political orientation, combined income of parents, highest educational level of mother, highest educational level of father, college of major, and grade point average on dominance, self-esteem, or life satisfaction. One might have expected that people who were extreme with regard to political orientation and religiosity would have higher scores on one of the three scales as a result of rigidity in their thoughts; however, this did not occur.

There was a significant main effect of dominance and self-esteem on life satisfaction, with a nonsignificant interaction effect. High dominance scorers, regardless of level of self-esteem, were high in life satisfaction. It was hypothesized that those who scored high on the Dominance scale would score low on the Self-Esteem scale and would also score low on the Life Satisfaction scale. The data did not support the hypothesis. It was found that most subjects who scored high on the Dominance scale also scored high on the Self-Esteem scale and on the Life Satisfaction scale; even within the low self-esteem group, high dominance subjects scored higher on life satisfaction.

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